Big data firm Palantir working with US on vaccine effort

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Alex Karp, CEO of Palantir, is seen in a 2019 picture

Big data company Palantir is working with US health officials on a project to track the production and distribution of future COVID-19 vaccines.

The project first reported by the Wall Street Journal and confirmed by AFP, would use data science to help manage the deployment of any vaccines.

Palantir, which has drawn fire for its police and homeland security projects and for one of its founders' close ties to President Donald Trump, did not comment on the report.

The Journal reported that the software system with the code name Tiberius could help identify high-priority populations at highest risk of infection but that the deal could draw fire by allowing the private company access to sensitive health information.

At least one pharmaceutical firm has indicated it will seek authorization for a vaccine in the US in November.

Palantir, which last month listed shares on the New York Stock Exchange, has defended its police and national security work in the face of critics who have said the company is enabling human rights violations.

Created after the September 11, 2001 attacks with initial funding from a CIA venture capital unit, Palantir and its predictive analytics platform has reportedly helped the US military locate Osama bin Laden and track weapons movements in the Middle East.

More recently it has worked with British health officials along with Google and Microsoft to track the progress of the COVID-19 outbreak, according to contracts released by the Open Democracy Project.

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